

Early Days ... 1840 - 1870

The district we now call Avondale was principally known as “the Whau” until 1882. This term extended to cover New Lynn (until 1880), Blockhouse Bay, and Waterview areas. Prior to around 1870, it was also used to cover the area of Glen Eden, Henderson, Titirangi and the Waitakeres.

There is still some doubt among local historians as to the origin of “Te Whau” – whether, as some early settlers believed, it meant “wilderness” or “desolation”, due to the thick scrub and ti-tree landscape, virtually impassable in the early days (so much so that New Lynn was originally avoided altogether), or after the “whau tree”.

“Whau (Entelea arborescens) is a small tree which occurs in coastal forests, and can be seen today in the bush along the coastal edges of the Waitakere Ranges. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the Maoris valued the wood of the Whau tree because of its low specific gravity, and used it for fishing floats and for the framework of small boats.” [From *Maungawhau/ Mt Eden Management plan* web page, Auckland City Council's web site.]

The lands which we now know as Avondale, Waterview and Blockhouse Bay had been included in a sales deed dated 11th January 1836 between Thomas Mitchel an entrepreneur originally from New South Wales but based in the Hokianga, and Apihai Te Kawau of Ngati Whatua Nga Oho, Wetere Te

Kaue of Ngati Tamahoa Waiohua, Te Tinana and Tamaki Rewiti. This was later brought under dispute in 1840, as it had been made prior to the Treaty of Waitangi, and not approved by government land commissioners. [Cornwallis, John Lifton, 2002, p. 16-17]

1841

Ngati Whatua Land Sale to the Crown: Some sources say that the Ngati Whatua had just been through a conflict with the Nga Puhi from the North, and were relatively few in numbers (having also come through two epidemics), though the Nga Puhi had not yet moved onto Tamaki Makaurau (the Auckland isthmus). This meant that the Ngati Whatua were still Auckland's tangata whenua, and as such signed the land deeds to follow (1841 to 1848) to ensure a buffer of settlers between themselves and the Nga Puhi.

29 June 1841 – Sale of Land Deed signed in Auckland between Ngati Whatua and the Crown, which included the much of the Whau area.

1842

Local Government: Governor Hobson proclaimed the creation of the County of Eden (including the Whau) in 1842. However, before any framework of authority could be established, Hobson died. Nothing further was done in the way of establishing territorial authority over the landowners until the establishment of the Hundreds. [Janice C Mogford, *Onehunga, a brief history*, 1977]

1843

In 1843, John Shedden Adam (1822-1906) was granted Allotment 85 in the Whau in return for his land shares in the failed Cornwallis settlement. He arrived from Scotland with his sister on the *Brilliant* at Cornwallis, on Puponga Point by the Manukau Heads on 27 October 1841.

As the land ownership was in doubt at Cornwallis, the settlement (once promised to be the main city on the isthmus) didn't take hold. In 1843, the immigrants were offered an acre of Crown "waste land" for every 4 acres they held in Cornwallis. John S Adam took up the offer, and was granted Allotment 85 in the Parish of Titirangi, in the Whau District. This is a remarkable fact, in that previously the earliest known settlement of the Whau District, which included modern day Avondale, had been after the Auckland Land Sales of 1844, waiting for 1845 before men such as Henry Walton and Daniel Pollen started building their homesteads in the district. But, it would seem, due to the connections of either Adams, the rest of the Cornwallis settlers, or both – the government of the day gave part of their "waste land" area as a grant ahead of schedule.

It has been theorised that this original house on the site was a kit house, with kauri beams having been shipped to England, dressed to size, roofing and other items added and then everything shipped right back to New Zealand, with a design close to that of Australian styles of the era, with deep verandahs. However, considering that the Adam family were "well-

established" by 1844/1845, I question the amount of time the above arrangements would have taken. Adam most likely had a small, colonial-style house, perhaps similar to Acacia Cottage (presently in Cornwall Park, the dwelling built by Campbell and Brown). After all, in other notes found in the T. Lowe papers from 9 Acton Place, it is said that John Adam "had a powerful lobby of friends" which included John Logan Campbell, the builder of Acacia Cottage. It is said that the building had 3 fireplaces, timber-beamed floors and "an overall feeling of homely elegance". This would have been Adam putting his skills to work – as he was "a skilled surveyor and architect of considerable wealth".

On 1 December 1845, his father wrote to him from Edinburgh:

I am glad to see that you are at work with potatoes and pumpkins. I wish I had the opportunity of giving you lessons on farming. I do not think the place you have chosen is as pleasant as one would be with plenty of water. I think if you decide on remaining in New Zealand at all, you should look out for a pleasant situation of about 50-100 acres near the seaside, and having a stream of water, and purchase it and sell your ownership.

As it was, John Adam felt his talents were wasted as a "yeoman farmer". In 1846, he settled up his affairs in New Zealand, and moved to Sydney, never to return.

However, his allotments, now including much of allotments 83, 84 and 13 (much of New Windsor and Avondale Central bought during the actual land sales of 1845), still remained in the combined ownership of himself and his sisters.

In the Lowe papers, there is a brief reference to the house being removed and sent to a Mr Russell, apparently a business partner of Adam, perhaps in Australia. If so, then Allotment 85 holds no real remnant of that early 2 year occupancy of J. S. Adam.

From 1849 to 1865 apparently came a succession of occupiers of the land at Allotment 85 who, unlike John S Adam, certainly made their mark on the history of the district. There was first Mr James Comrie (in whose home the first Presbyterian services in the district are said to have been held, prior to the construction of the Church in 1860). Later, another elder of the Church, Mr John Buchanan, who ran a warehousing business on Karangahape Road and Queen Street in the city, is listed as having been a tenant of Adam on the allotment. From 1863, he was on the Whau School Committee. He was later the first Chairman of the Mt Albert Highways District (1867) and on the Whau Highways District Board from 1868. Along with an elder from Riverhead, he is said to have donated land to the Presbyterian Church, in order that the present-day St Ninians Hall could be built for services.

Part of Allotment 85, Sections 5, 6 and 7 were sold by John Adam to Buchanan on 2 July 1866. These

were the central portions of the allotment.

And finally, just before 1865, James Palmer (future owner of the Whau Hotel) came to the site

[Main sources were the T. Lowe documents, his researches from 1981 regarding the history of 9 Acton Place and its occupants. The documents included *Man of Many Parts* by Graeme Adam; copies of land deeds and grant documents; notes made from Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages; copies of old maps held in Auckland City Libraries and Department of Land Information; and diagrams of "Banwell".]

1844-45

Land Subdivisions: The original land sales of "waste land" at the Whau. The first purchaser of land that was to become the Avondale Shopping Centre were:

Allotment 63

From Henry St to Rosebank Road, east side of Great North Rd:
Henry Walton (1844)

Allotment 64

From Rosebank Road to Chalmers St, east side of Great North Rd and St Georges Rd: Mr Florence (1844). Much of this later purchased by Michael Wood in the late 1850s to early 1860s, and offered for auction in 1863 as "Greytown".

Allotment 13

Great North Rd (west) from the site of the future Avondale Hotel to halfway between St Georges Rd and Rosebank Road: Mr J S Adam (1844)

Allotment 12

Great North Road (from Allotment 13) and down Rosebank Road,

west side: Messrs Mariner and Bower (1845)

Allotment 7

Part of Rosebank Road, Great North Road towards Avondale Bowling Club. Mr Poynton (1844). Later purchased by Robert Chisholm, as part of his greater estate until 1882.

Of these purchasers, only Henry Walton was still a registered landowner in the Whau District in 1868 when the Highway District was created. [1868 Assessment Roll]. His land began to be subdivided in 1883, after he had earlier retired to England in 1866.

It is likely that the lots would have first been used for cattle and goat grazing, as it was felt those animals had a better chance of coping with the dense scrub covering much of the Whau district.

Whau Creek Bridge: In the earliest days, Great North Road was merely a narrow dirt track through the wilderness, and the main form of transport to the country areas from Auckland was by boat.

“The development of communication was the key to the development of both suburbs and the hinterland ... Most of the early settlements beyond Auckland were in fact sites on navigable creeks.”

[Auckland Boom or Bust, Auckland Museum, 2000, p.7]

“From the early 1840s the road to Titirangi was via Blockhouse Bay across the upper reaches of the Whau Creek, along the ridge (which is now Golf Road) across

the present Titirangi Road and down to Atkinson Valley then up the hill to Titirangi. However, with the growth of settlement in the western districts, a wooden bridge was built across the Whau Creek downstream from the present one [Great North Road]. [John T Diamond, Once The Wilderness, Lodestar Press, 1977]



First New Zealand War. A scare swept Auckland that Hone Heke of Nga Puhi was about to invade. Dr Pollen, according to Avondale lore, put a gate across the Whau creek beside his property at the end of Rosebank Peninsula to prevent Maori warriors from coming up the creek.

The Great North Road is worked out, initially leading along the New North Road line to Rocky Nook, then along Western Springs Road to the present Great North Road (this route used to avoid swamps). Around this time, the bridge across Oakley's Creek (near where the North-Western Motorway crosses today) may have been first built, if not before.

1848-53

Local Authority: Short-lived “Hundreds” system of local authority, with the County of Eden being split into six parts, with a hundred families each, with a warden overseeing them, instituted 1850. (In 1851, the Borough of Auckland was formed, but lasted only a year.) “Governor Grey

believed that the Hundreds would ultimately develop into 'important municipalities'. Landholders within the Hundred were to elect Wardens by a rather curious franchise based on how many 'great cattle' (horses, oxen, bulls, dairy cows, heifers and asses) and 'small cattle' (sheep and goats) they held. The wardens duties were the supervision and construction of roads and other public works and the administration of the "wasteland".

"The so-called 'wasteland' was what we now call Crown Land and had been acquired by various means by the Government, either by direct purchase from the Maoris or by the simple expedient of declaring to importunate land claimants that 'the land is required for military purposes and defence requirements are paramount'. In this way a large acreage of land in and around the town was vested in the Crown. Stockholders who needed extra grazing were required to buy a licence and pay so much a head to pasture their cattle. The income the Wardens gained from this was small ... within its limits the Hundred system worked reasonably well. [Janice C Mogford, Onehunga, a brief history, 1977]

At some point in the 1850s, two future settlements were mapped out for the district: "Whau Township, North" (Avondale) and "Whau Township, South" (Blockhouse Bay). It is likely they were meant to compliment the Whau Canal being discussed at the time.

Around 5 or 6 settler families are believed to have been in the area by this time. By now it is believed that Henry Walton (who would

remain as a listed land owner, but mainly having connections with North Auckland and Whangarei areas) until later in the 1860s, and Daniel Pollen (who died in the 1890s) had settled in the Whau district.

1853

Auckland Provincial Council formed. This lasted until 1875. Matters were addressed to the Superintendent. Funding for community projects such as libraries and public schools would come from the Provincial Council, until "they got hard up", to quote Mr John Bollard later in the century. The Council were also the instigators of the tollgates at Great North Road and Mt Eden-New North intersection in the city, which controlled traffic moving from the suburbs to the city, and generated funds for road maintenance and bridge-building..



First bridge over Oakley Creek from Mt Albert built, by the Provincial Council. The road from Mt Albert westward is known as The Whau Highway, or "Wahu Road", the name for the district at the time. Alternate spelling was "Wao", hence the pronunciation "Wow" or "Way-o" used by European settlers. [Auckland Provincial Gazette, 25/4/1854]

This bridge was later called the Gittos Bridge, after the Gittos family who had land (and a tannery) to the north of the New North road, bordering on the Whau.

1856

Mr J Comrie lived at the Whau, and his brother was among those Presbyterian ministers holding monthly services at his house until the church was built in 1859-1860.

1857

Benjamin Gittos established his tanning business, known as B. Gittos and Sons. Soon after, he purchased land in Avondale along the Oakley Creek and is one of the two original industries in Avondale's history (the other, pre-dating by a few years, was Dr. Pollen's brickyard at the end of Rosebank peninsula.

From now on, settlement in the area by labourers is encouraged by the existence of work in the area.

1859

Auction of "Waste Lands" in the Whau District, 5 August 1859 by the Provincial Council.

65 Lots were auctioned in "Whau Township, North", averaging half an acre each, at £5 per quarter-acre, and more than 200 more in "Whau Township, South" (Blockhouse Bay, Green Bay etc.). This could have assisted settlement of the area, although Whau South remained largely wilderness up to the 1880s.

November 14th, 1859 work began on the **Presbyterian Church**, reported at the time of its opening in 1860 as being "on about three acres of land", in a "very central

position, occupying the corner formed by the junction of the road to the Lower Whau with the great North Road." [*New Zealander*, 14 April 1860].

It was believed, based on a history of the church drawn up at the time of its centennial, that the land was donated by church elders of the time John Buchanan (Whau) and John Lamb (Riverhead). However, the *New Zealander* stated that the land was instead "a liberal gift of John S. Adams [sic], Esq. Of Sydney, and his sister, who resides at Edinburgh." Possibly, though, Buchanan and Lamb arranged the transfer to the church.

"High winds and slashing rainstorms drove the carpenters from the job in the first week of December 1859, causing delays." [Peter Buffett, *Western Leader*, 30/5/87]

1860

Great North Road/ Whau Highway: On March 2 1860 a petition was received by the Provincial Council regarding the line of road from "Whao Bridge to Auckland" (this was via Mt Albert and Cabbage Tree Swamp – the Whau Highway or as it is now the New North Road).

A counter-petition was received, asking that the road from Karangahape to the Whau not be forgotten (Great North Road). Settlers along this road were concerned about access to their farms if the highway was to be along the New North Rd route. Among the petitioners were 11 men from the Whau, 2 of whom (Thomas Cragot and Frederick L Prince) termed themselves as

coming from the “Whau Township”.
[Provincial Council papers, 1860]

The Great North Road, originally formed to serve as a transport route of sorts during the first scare of war with the northern Maori tribes, by the 1860s was a disputed route (meetings were held, arguing whether the route should come through Arch Hill (Grey Lynn) as it does today, or via the Newton gully (where today the North-Western Motorway lies). It was also in a very bad condition, letters to the *NZ Herald* in the 1860s complaining of carts becoming stuck in the mud along the road beside Waterview, while meetings were called at the Whau Hotel in 1865 to call for metalling of the road (the Superintendent of the Provincial Council reported he had no funds for this).

The Presbyterian Church at St Georges Rd was completed by Easter 1860.

“OPENING SERVICES AT WHAU. The Whau Presbyterian Church and School will be opened on Sabbath the 8th instant at three o’clock p.m. by the Rev. John Macky of Otahuhu.

A collection will be made on behalf of the Building Fund.” [Southern Cross, 6/4/1860]

Over 60 people attended the opening.

The church was used as a school until the Public Hall was built in 1867. *“A hinged table fastened along the eastern side of the Church was lowered against the wall out of the way for the Sabbath services.”* [Our First Century, centenary booklet, St Ninians Church, 1960].

Also in 1860, the **Whau Blockhouse** (in what is now Blockhouse Bay) was completed (July 1860), in response to fears of an attack on Auckland from the Waikato tribes. The nearest source of provisions, over and above those purchased by government contract for the regiments stationed there, was the developing Whau Township.

1861

Roads: *“In 1861 when my grandfather came to Avondale there were of course no formed roads. The settlers hauled to and fro along clay tracks in tea-tree covered wilds.”* [D Ringrose, 1940, *Challenge of the Whau*, p. 22]

Horse buses: It is recorded on 20 March 1861 that a Mr W Young ran a regular coach omnibus service, Auckland to Henderson Mill, via the Whau. [M Butler report, Heritage Planning, Auckland City Council, 2001]

William J. Young started out by running a horse bus service with a partner between Auckland and Drury in the late 1850s, then branching out on his own for the Great North Road route. His omnibus service made the journey daily, except on Sundays, starting “for the conveyance of passengers and light goods between Auckland and Henderson’s Mill, leaving Mr. James’ Luncheon Larder, Shortland-street,” at 9 a.m, returning from Henderson’s Mill at 3 p.m. The fare from Auckland to the Whau Township was 2 shillings – possibly the stop would have been close to where the first Whau Hotel would have been, in order to take advantage of the stabling

facilities, and the chance of a tipple.

Almost immediately after the inauguration of Young's service, **Michael Wood** put his development along the Great North Route on the market, on 1 May 1861, naming it "Waterview". Had the development succeeded, the growth of the Whau township to the south might have been delayed significantly. However, Wood failed to sell much of the development at all, as with his later venture of "Greytown" (see under 1863)

John Bollard: In 1861, John Bollard came to live in the Whau. *"For something like 30 years he farmed a considerable area, and old retired farmers here to this day hold him up as a model farmer, he having been scientifically taught the art at college in Ireland."* [The News, 27/3/1915].

John Bollard was born around 17 December 1839 near Coan, County Wicklow, Ireland. He emigrated to New Zealand in 1860, and married Jane Ganley in St John's College Chapel, Tamaki.

He brought back from Australia 200 horses for use of the Militia during the Waikato part of the New Zealand Wars, and later joined the militia, appointed Sergeant in charge of the Blockhouse overlooking the Manukau.

Settling on his farm in Avondale, part of Allotment 12, he grew wheat, barley, oats and potatoes for troops engaged in the New Zealand Wars in the Waikato, and also established his business as a land agent and valuer.

He owned the land which included part of the Avondale Racecourse (his widow living on the corner of Ash Street and Rosebank Road after Bollard's death in 1915). According to a relative, he drained the raupo swamp on the land, which extended to Riversdale Road. In the late 1890s, "Riversdale Estate" was a joint development project of John Bollard and the Jockey Club, forming Wharf Road (now Ash Street).

Bollard's "Whau Farm" was quite a small business in its own right. Mr Bollard's account book (now held in the Auckland Museum library) shows accounts opened for many of his neighbours, for items ranging from providing potatoes, chaff, legs of mutton, to hiring out grazing for horses and cattle, and on to selling services by his bull for the neighbours' cows. It was described in some detail by the *NZ Herald* in 1884.

The *NZ Herald* reported in October 1861 that the **Great North Road** had been completed up to Mahurangi. Cattle were now being driven into town along the road, and certainly through the Whau Township, to Auckland.

1862

Whau Bridge: In a letter to the Provincial Council Supervisor, J Sanderson writes of the work at the Whau Bridge: 650 feet of plankings and handrail repairs, costing £9, 3 /- [26/3/1862, Provincial Council papers]

As another indication of settlement, 1862 was when **Dr Thomas Aickin** dedicated an acre of his farm on Rosebank to the Anglican Church

for a cemetery – his son William being the first burial there in August of that year. The cemetery would later be known as Rosebank Cemetery, and now called the George Maxwell Memorial Cemetery.

Dr. Aickin built his homestead close to what is now Avondale Road in 1859 and was the district's first resident medical practitioner, being the one to be called upon when emergencies arose. He went on to work at the Lunatic Asylum from the mid 1860s. His house was enough of a landmark in 1861, that it could be seen from the Great North Road as horse buses travelled along the Auckland to Henderson's Mill route.

1863

Post Office: *"The first post office was at a store just round the corner from the present one. It was conducted by Mr Holloway. The first store and a butcher's shop in conjunction with it was opened on the corner of Rosebank Road and Princes Street [now Elm St]"* [Events in the Early History of Avondale, author unknown, from 1920s/early 1930s, Auckland Public Library]

"[The First Post Office] was begun in 1863 in a small store situated near the corner of the present Rosebank Road and Elm Street, and was conducted by the storekeeper, Mrs Myers. There were then only five or six homes in the district, and, with the exception of a few clearings, Avondale was covered with manuka" [Speech by H.G.R. Mason, Minister of Justice, 19 August 1938]

This may have been Mrs T B Myers, running the Whau Store in

1864. [Bollard papers, held in Auckland War Memorial Museum Library] Newspaper articles from October 1863 however speak of the general store being on the "town side" of the hotel – which would mean it was at or near the corner of Rosebank Road and Great North Road where the Fearons Building stands today.

First Avondale Hotel: *"The first hotel – a wooden building – was built in the early sixties at the corner of Great North Road and Rosebank Roads."* [Events in the Early History of Avondale, author unknown, from 1920s/early 1930s, Auckland Public Library].

This was on the south-west corner of Great North and Rosebank Roads. This was reportedly burned down a few years later, by 1870, although no reference to this has yet been found, aside from the following:

"[The first hotel] was destroyed by fire early in the seventies. The licence was then transferred to a building at the corner where the present post office stands [Avondale Hotel] A new hotel was afterwards built also of wood ..." [Events in the Early History of Avondale].

Judging from the size of the present-day Public Hall, built in 1867 and still standing in St George's Road, reported to be the largest building constructed in the district up to that time, the original Whau Hotel must have been a small affair; little more, possibly, than a bar/counter plus storage space.

It might seem curious that the first hotel was built where it was. After all, Rosebank Road was barely a dirt lane, and Brown Street had yet

to start wending its way up Station Hill. But a stream ran down the hill, and a natural spring once bubbled up under what is now the former National Bank building on the corner. The best way to make the house ales was when you had a supply of clear, free flowing water.

Also, the site where the later Hotels were situated was in the 1860s a marshy raupo swamp, prone to flooding. This latter site is still part of a flood plain leading to the Flats and the Whau Creek.

From the Scrapbooks kept at the Auckland War Memorial Museum Library, an unknown author reminisced, possibly to the *NZ Herald* in 1887 about hotels in general. He was referring principally to the Auckland Central hotels and pubs, but it reflects back onto all the rest:

"In the early days we had not quite so much trouble over the licensing question, and an hotel was a sure means of making money, but it is not everybody who likes to be at all hours at the beck and call of the public. It is true, a monopoly was made of the business at one time, and I do not think there were many more drunkards on Monday morning then there are now, having regard, of course, to the proportionate population.

"I was one day sympathising with my neighbour, who 'ran' a 'pub' on the new law [limiting the hours to Sunday closure 3 miles from the city centre, not affecting Avondale] coming into force to close the public houses on Sundays. He replied, 'Oh, I like the closing system best. When you are open, a man spends 3d, and hangs about the place all the afternoon, but when there is a difficulty in getting

the drink he will take three times as much, and clear out quickly." [p. 4, Vol 6, poss. from *NZ Herald*, 1887, Auckland War Memorial Museum Library Scrapbooks]

According to an early newspaper the *New Zealander*, John Priestley had a "10 pm closing" licence for the Whau Hotel as at Tuesday, 4 August 1863. By October 1863, Henry Denyer was the publican, while James Nugent Copland was the licensee in 1866. David Henderson had a "publican's bush licence" in 1867.

[Jacqueline Walle's *New Zealand Records*, <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Rhodes/5510/newzealand/walles/>]

This was Central Avondale, in the early days of the Whau District: a church, a general store, and a pub. The hotels were to be outshone by the Great Northern Hotel at Western Springs (the Old Stone Jug) until that pub closed for business in 1886, as far as travellers were concerned, but both the store and the pub served the volunteer soldiers based at the Blockhouse just down the road at the bay.

A general description of pioneer inns from the Auckland Historical Society's newsletter of 1963:

"Sometimes the inn was a tumbledown affair of rough logs or iron, affording little privacy or comfort for the guests; sometimes the bedrooms were of the poorest type and there were no washing facilities at all; often there was drinking and roistering and at some places a very poisonous brew of spirits was sold to the men who came in from the bush to spend their pay, but also there was often much real hospitality and kindness shown to travellers and many

stockmen and miners must have been glad to see the signboard of an inn, as they struggled against wind and weather on the rough roads so common in the last century."

The Whau School Committee was formed in 1863, when new settler John Bollard as the chairman, a post he'd hold for the next 52 years, until his death in 1915.

As early as 1863, the Provincial Council is said to have designated the land on what was to be St Georges Road, across from the Presbyterian Church, as a **"public hall and community centre"**. [Report by Clinton Savage, Community Advisor, to Acting Community Development Officer, Auckland City, 21/9/88]

"Greytown": On 3 March 1863, an area of the present town centre was auctioned off, in the form of 48 approximately 1 acre lots, from Browne Street (Rosebank Road) to the north, to the Government Road (Chalmers Street) to the south, from the Great North Road to Manukau Road (Blockhouse Bay Road).

The auctioneer's map, held now in the Special Collections section of Auckland Public Library, shows "Greytown Hotel" (the first Whau Hotel), a store on what was to be Princess Street, and a "chapel" (the Presbyterian Church. (see map by title page).

1864

"The first bakery was opened at the corner of Great North Road and the road leading up past the school [Crayford St]. It was erected, also a

shop, about the year 1864. About the year 1870 these buildings were destroyed by fire." [Events in the Early History of Avondale, author unknown, from 1920s/early 1930s, Auckland Public Library]

The only fire found to date that could be the one referred to above, was 5 February 1869, when *"the buildings in the Whau Road, near Henderson's Hotel, known as Clement Crispe's Store, were burned down"* in the morning. *"The buildings, which include stores, a bakehouse and stable, were built in a quadrangular form, and were unoccupied, with the exception of two rooms, which were inhabited by a man named Robert Simmons and his wife. Simmons worked at Mr Gittos' tanyard."*

Clement Crispe seemed to be an interesting character in the district during the 1860s. In July 1867, premises he owned near the Whau Blockhouse were raided for an illicit still, which led to him losing his property in mortgagee sales.

1865

The Titirangi Presbyterian parish splits from Onehunga, becoming separate, covering an area up to Helensville, but based in the Whau district.

From 1865 to 1873, John Shedden Adams and his three sisters sold pieces of Allotment 13 to buyers such as William Forsyth (builder of the Public Hall, John Tait (father of WJ Tait) and James Palmer (owner of the second and third Hotels). [Challenge of the Whau].

Adam is recorded as having ownership interests which he

transferred to Palmer in Allotment 13 also around this time, possibly including the site of the two hotels Palmer would erect in the village-to-be.

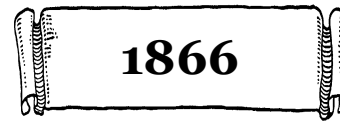
James Palmer (1819-1893) left Plymouth bound for New Zealand on 4 December 1842 on the *Westminster*, arriving 31 March 1843. He gave his age as 22, and that of a “Maria Palmer” as 18. Before coming to the Whau in the mid 1860s, he was the keeper of the Royal Hotel in Eden Terrace. He is more noted, however, as being the owner of two of the four Whau Hotels – one built in 1870 after the first one burned down, and the third in 1873, after his had followed the fate of its predecessor.

He would also be known as the donor of land for the Whau Public Hall (1867), and for St Jude’s Church (1884). Present-day Donegal Street was once called Palmer Street after him.

1866-67

Postal service: “*Mail despatched from Whau Bridge weekly*” [*New Zealand Directory*, 1866-67]

From 1865 to 1871, there were 4 Whau district postmasters: Charles Cooper, L H Holloway, J Holloway, and S McCallum. [Mike Butler report, Heritage Planning, Auckland City, 2001]. It is likely that these were also the succeeding proprietors of the general store.



Turnpike Act: There were no property rates in these early days, so local authorities had to find some other means of creating and maintaining the roads for settlement of the area. The Provincial Council brought in a Turnpike Act early in 1866 to help finance road works. “Three toll gates were erected in the western area, one on the Great North Road, one leading to Mt Eden, and one ... near the New North Road – Mt Eden Road junction. ‘There is considerable traffic on the roads leading to Cabbage Tree Swamp and the Whau,’ a daily paper remarked.” [Dick Scott, *In Old Mt Albert*, 1961]

February 22, 1866: 49 settlers in Mt Albert and the Whau sign a declaration to the Superintendent of the Provincial Council that that they “are desirous that the said district should be constituted in conformity with the Highways Act as therein provided, and to be called the Mount Albert District.”

Among them:

Frederick Bacon	“Windsor Whau”
James Palmer	“Royal Hotel” (owned land above Layard St, and the Whau Hotel)
Thomas Webb	“Windsor Whau”
Benjamin Belsham	“Windsor Whau”
A. H. Spicer	“Greytown” (Central Whau, the “Village”)
Horatio Peatfield	Whau

The Mount Albert Highway District was declared in October.

Quite a considerable amount of effort was put into **social gatherings** in the mid-19th century. At one such social held at the Presbyterian Church in December 1866, the interior was described as having “undergone a sort of floral metamorphose being profusely and withal tasteful decorated with graceful festoons and wreaths of flowers pendant from the ceiling, while branches of the fern tree and nikau ornamented the walls.” [NZ Herald, 21 December 1866]

1867

January 8 1867 was the first meeting of the Mt Albert Highway District Board, and the start of the era of territorial authority for the Whau District. However, it had not been the desire of the settlers of Mt Albert to be joined with the Whau at all. Mt Albert’s board members felt the district was too unwieldily to administer properly, and had two competing main roads (New North and Great North Roads) vying for a share of the toll monies, the only source of funding for repairs and maintenance in those days. This issue would come to a head a year later.

John Buchanan, a Central Auckland businessman of note, and Whau landowner, was elected unopposed to the board along with four others. Buchanan’s land (just to the south-east of the present-day shopping centre) was valued in 1866 as being worth £600, and paid £2 10/- in land rates per annum.

The first year of the Board was stormy, in that a number of settlers called their own public protest meetings (several chaired by Whau resident Dr Thomas Aickin) concerning the rates levied, and the Board meetings themselves. They resulted in the rate being reduced to 1/2d in the £ at the first annual meeting in October, when John Buchanan became chairman of the board.

By late 1866, the Whau Minstrels had formed – a group of local men, including several from the Gittos Tannery over the ridge by New North Road. Probably started as a way to have a recreation activity after work, they included Mr Barraclough (later member of the Good Templars Lodge), Mr Bell (later postmaster) and Mr Francis Gittos (later on the committees for the public hall and the school). They may have been the local group mentioned in the *NZ Herald* of December 1866 as set up to sing “sacred songs”. Dr Aicken told a reporter from the *New Zealand Herald* how the group came around to the settler’s houses on New Years Eve, 1866, “*reminding him, as it did, of by-gone years, and calling up kindly recollections of the old country and the ‘old folks at home’.*”

The Minstrels were based on the Christy’s Minstrels, started in America in the mid 1840s, and then copied in England later (later the model of the Black and White Minstrel show, screened on television in the late 20th century). In early March, the Whau Minstrels performed for the first time to a mass audience of around 250 people in a marquee building constructed from tarpaulins (50 feet

long by 26 feet wide), *“being the largest building ever erected in the Whau”* up to that time, on land that quite possibly was the same plot donated by James Palmer to the community to erect the Public Hall later in the year. There was quite a fair amount of assistance from local connections with the setting up of the stage area: *“J. O. Hamley, Esq., Military Superintendent of Stores, kindly furnished the tarpaulins for the pavilion, and ... Messrs Henderson & Macfarlane (owner/operators of the famous Henderson Mill, and accompanying shipping line) and Capt. Nearing for the use of the bunting belonging to the Alice Cameron.”* The programme included 22 songs and dance numbers, including *“The Whau”* by Mr Holloway (general store owner). During the interval between the two parts to the programme, Mr Henderson of the **Whau Hotel** *“gave a very amusing recitation in the broad Scotch dialect, showing off his power to please to great advantage.”*

*“At the conclusion Dr Aicken called for three cheers for the ‘Whau Minstrels’ which was suitably responded to. Mr Barraclough (the conductor), stating that it was a matter of regret that a district so progressive and thriving on the Whau, should still be without its **public hall**, or even a reading room, in which such entertainments could be given. The ‘Whau Minstrels’, either by their services in the way of a musical entertainment, or by pecuniary aid, were ready to assist in the accomplishment of so desirable an objective.*

“We are glad to hear that already a goodly amount of subscriptions

have been promised, and that the existence of a public hall at the Whau is likely to become a ‘great fact’. The young men of the district will find in such objects and duties a pleasurable recreation and amusement, all the more enjoyable in that such reminiscences leave no saddening traces on the memory.”

On Thursday March 21, they gave their second performance, with much the same programme, but the primary purpose of this session was to fundraise for the future public hall. Afterwards, donations were asked for, and the first Public Hall Committee meeting announced for the Wednesday after.

[Quotes in italics above come from Auckland War Memorial Museum Library Scrapbook collection, Vol 22, pp. 143-148, out of *NZ Herald*, 1867]

First meeting in John Bollard’s Home of the **Whau Public Hall Committee, 27 March**. By April, James Palmer had donated land on St Georges Rd, opposite land held by the Presbyterian Church, for the Public Hall. A tender from local carpenter/builder Mr William Forsyth of £97 to build the hall is accepted, with building to be completed by September. With one thing and another, details not in the Committee minutes, the Whau Public Hall opened officially on 13 November 1867, and was insured in November for £100. [Minutes of the Whau Public Hall Committee, 1867]

The First Whau Library :

James Traue , in *Once Upon a Time in New Zealand: Library Aspirations And Colonial Reality in the Early Years of European Settlement* (Stout Centre Review, March 1993), stated that settlers

‘carried a virulent infection from nineteenth-century Britain in their trunks of books and it was not to be subdued by distance, salt water, or the shock of immersion in colonial life. After only some two decades of experiment and failure they opted to supplement self-help with state aid in the provision of libraries...to ensure their rights to books.’

In **November 1867**, Francis Gittos proposed that “the members of the Committee procure as many books as possible for the formation of a library for the Hall.” Books were to be solicited to form a library for the Hall for the use of the public.

By 1868, about 130 volumes had been collected on a list. The library was to start with the books in hand, with John Buchanan as the first librarian. The subscription amount was 2/- per quarter. By December of that year, however, “on account of the decrease of the population of the District it is inexpedient at the present time to take action in the matter of the Library.” [Minutes of Whau Public Hall Committee, 1867-68]

“The population of Auckland fluctuated as a result of external influences eg. Gold rushes and troops leaving. Generally there were more men than women and the population was youthful, with 80% under 40 years old. It was essentially a British Immigrant society.” [*Auckland Boom or Bust*, Auckland Museum, 2000, p. 8]

Depression: There was also a depression hitting Auckland Province, in the wake of the boom during the Second New Zealand War earlier that decade. The Provincial Government held onto the toll gate monies collected

during this time, despite appeals from Highway District Boards in its area.

1868

Local Authority: Whau Highway District Board (5 October 1868). This was still subservient to the Provincial Council, but split from Mt Albert District.

The Whau District appears to have split from Mt Albert for a number of reasons. We previously seen the dispute the Mt Albert District board had with the Provincial Council regarding boundaries and main road competition for funding (see under 1867). On September 16 1868, a deputation from the Mt Albert board, led by John Buchanan, waited upon the Provincial Council Superintendent to make a claim to have the Whau and Mt Albert districts split from each other, after having a meeting of (Mt Albert) ratepayers. The Superintendent asked Buchanan whether anyone from the other district had attended the meeting, to which Buchanan replied, “they did not attend in any number. Only a gentleman named Young had attended, and in fact it appeared that the people living in that direction knew nothing about the connection with the Mount Albert District.” [*Daily Southern Cross*, 17/9/1868] In the year before, the Mt Albert Highway District meetings often ended in controversy, with differences arising from the leadership of the board and the issues of road tolls. In the latter stages, the Provincial Government attempted to have the Newton District joined with the Whau, which was strenuously objected to by John Buchanan and John Bollard.

In the end, at a meeting held in the Whau Hotel on 22 September, the Whau residents considered that going it alone, and raising their own monies through land rates, was the best way to go.

It was not a smooth process. At an acrimonious meeting (29 September), settlers of the Mt Albert District found to their dismay that while some settlers along the New North Road had chosen to stay with Mt Albert, others wished to be in the Whau District (including their Chairman John Buchanan), which effectively meant that the New North Road was under the maintenance budgets of two separate territorial authorities (a situation which lasted for the next 121 years).

Great North Road formed: The Great North Road was by now looked on as the main route to settlement of the area. Previous work on the main road by the Provincial Council had stopped abruptly, leaving the levels “four feet” above the rest of the road, making it difficult to use, if not dangerous. The Chairman [John Bollard] having read a letter from the Superintendent [of the Auckland Province] accompanying a copy of the *Provincial Gazette* stated that the Business of the Meeting was to consider the propriety of appointing a deputation to wait upon the Superintendent to ascertain what assistance if any the [Provincial] Government would give to make the Great North Road.

Mr Buchanan thought that the Trustees should first ascertain the position of the Government with relation to the road. Bollard, Thomas & Buchanan to visit

Superintendent **1/11/1868** at 11.30 a.m. The Chairman then submitted the plan of the District when disappointment was generally expressed that the District comprised so few of the lands in the direction of the Whau Blockhouse. [Minutes of Whau Highways District Board, **31/10/1868**]

Public Hall events: Soirees or quadrillions became a regular fixture in the Public Hall. There was one held every year on the Hall's anniversary, and others to fundraise for special events, the school, the libraries etc. In December 1868, the tickets to that soiree cost 2/-, children half price, and “the ladies are to provide the tea trays”. A soiree on 28 December 1870 was in aid of building an ante-room at the back of the hall.

1869

Great North Road: The Auckland Provincial Superintendent advised a deputation [of Board members] that “*the Government considered themselves to have special charge of the making and maintaining of the Great North Road and also that it was probable that the Road from Thomas' Mill [on Oakley Creek, near present North-Western Motorway] to the Whau Church [St Ninians] would be extended if the sum required could be placed in the estimates.*” [Minutes of Whau Highway District Board, 26/2/1869]

(As a note, the phrase “wait until the estimates”, or the budgeting round each year of the authorities referred to throughout this timeline, would appear again and again in Avondale's history of relations with first Provincial Government, then

Central Government, and finally Auckland City Council in its various forms over the years. All requests for minor or major works had to be budgeted for. Often, the queue of needy projects was a long one indeed, and Avondale authorities and groups simply learned to stand and wait.)

Whau Educational District was established **2 June 1869**, with a public meeting at the Whau Hall taking place on **10 June** “to appoint a Chairman, elect a School Committee, and for the other purposes set forth in the Common Schools Act 1869”. [*Provincial Gazette*, 1869]

It had already been decided by the Whau settlers that the Public Hall was to be opened as a public school in **February 1868**. [minutes of Whau Public Hall Committee, 1868]

District boundaries: [From Annual Report of the Whau Highways District Board, presented to gathered ratepayers in the Whau Public Hall, **5/10/1869**]

“In common with many of your number the Trustees were much disappointed at the smallness of the District as originally proclaimed by the Superintendent. It only comprised 1815 acres, and even although you levied the highest rate allowed by the Highways Act 1867 viz. 1/- per acre, the Rates amounted only to the sum of £91, 5/-. Your Trustees therefore took measure to have the district enlarged and were met in the best spirits by the Trustees of the adjoining districts.

Much land naturally belonging to Whau was thrown in with Mt Roskill [proclaimed as a Highway District

Board before the Whau, in 1867]. The effect of a larger area diffused the rates burden, allowing lesser rates to be levied per section.”

Before the alteration, the “Assessment List On All Lands Subject To The Highway Rates Within The Whau Highway District” for 1868 had 56 landowners. Afterward, the “Whau Assessment Roll” for 1869 lists 121 landowners for the entire Whau District from Waterview to Blockhouse Bay. **The rates** were set at 6 pence per acre.

The Board also referred to the extension of **New North Road** down Blake St [St Judes St], meeting Blake St by way of the diagonal extension. The whole road from the intersection of New North and Manukau [Blockhouse Bay] Roads down the hill to Great North Road was to be called New North Road.

Blake St, the straight downhill road through James Palmer’s land already, was closed off at the top to make way for the diagonal cut through his land. But the name Blake St was resurrected by the 1890s, replacing “New North Road” for the extension.

This now unofficial road cut off from the remainder of Blake Street was still a track through to the town used by people walking from Manukau Road. Before gaslight days, it was a dark, steep, and perilously slippery route to take to get to events in the Public Hall or the Presbyterian Church from the New Windsor area at night. It is now totally built over, and has vanished.

